

Message Text

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E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR KS KN

SUBJECT : MEETING WITH PRESIDENT PARK

REF: EMBTEL 2807

SUMMARY: PRESIDENT PARK CALLED AMBASSADOR AT LAST MINUTE FOR MEETING MORNING APRIL 23 INITIALLY TO REQUEST IMMEDIATE POSTPONEMENT OF I CORPS DEACTIVATION. LENGTHY DISCUSSION FOR OVER AN HOUR THEN ENSUED WITH PARK UNVEILING HIS DEEP PERSONAL CONCERNS REGARDING CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS AND HEIGHTENED NORTH KOREAN THREAT. RECOMMENDED ACTION: I STRONGLY RECOMMEND IMMEDIATE NOTIFICATION TO ROK THAT I CORPS DEACTIVATION IS POSTPONED INDEFINITELY. END SUMMARY.

1. I CORPS DEACTIVATION. AT MEETING (ATTENDED ONLY BY PRESIDENTIAL SECRETARY GENERAL AND INTERPRETER) PRESIDENT PARK OPENED DISCUSSION WITH REQUEST FOR POSTPONEMENT US PLANS TO DEACTIVATE I CORPS, WHICH WHICH COMMANDS US AND KOREAN FORCES ON CIRITICAL WESTERN FRONT OF DMZ. HE HAD BEEN BRIEFED PREVIOUS DAY (APRIL 22) BY GENERALS STILWELL AND HOLLINGSWORTH (REPORT SENT SEPTTEL) AND WAS CONVINCED I CORPS ORGQNIZATION SHOULD REMAIN, PARTICULARLY IN LIGHT RECENT VIETNAM DEVELOPMENTS. US COMMAND OF I CORPS PROVIDED EFFECTIVE GROUND-AIR COORDINATION WHICH ESSENTIAL IN CASE OF ENEMY ATTACK. FURTHER-MORE DEACTIVATION OF I CORPS AT THIS TIME MIGHT ENCOURAGE
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KIM IL-SUNG TO MISCALULATE AND COULD HAVE ADVERSE PSYCHOLOGICAL EFFECT ON SOUTH KOREAN PEOPLE, EVEN THOUGH US TROOP LEVELS IN KOREA NOT BASICALLY AFFECTED.

2. PRESIDENT PARK REQUESTED THAT I OFFICIALLY INFORM WASHINGTON OF HIS VIEWS, AS HE EXPECTED GENERAL STILWELL WOULD ALSO. I TOLD PRESIDENT I WOULD TRANSMIT HIS POSITION TO WASHINGTON AND URGE QUICK ACTION. RECOMMENDATION: UNDER PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCES I WOULD URGE IMMEDIATE NOTIFICATION TO PARK OF OUR POSTPONEMENT OF THE DEACTIVATION OF I CORPS. THIS RECOMMENDATION IS INCLUDED AMONG STEPS SUGGESTED TO BOLSTER PARK'S CONFIDENCE IN REFTEL.

3. NORTH KOREAN THREAT. PARK NEXT LAUNCHED INTO LENGTHY DISCOURSE ON INCREASED THREAT FROM NORTH, POSTULATED ON THESIS THAT KIM IL-SUNG WILL SEE PRESENT BEST TIME FOR ATTACK WITH US ADMINISTRATION IN TROUBLE DUE TO VIETNAM SETBACKS. HE LATER SUMMED UP HIS VIEWS OF CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS BY DESCRIBING PRESENT SITUATION AS DEVELOPING VERY UNFAVORABLY FOR KOREA WHICH FACED FURING PAST YEAR WITH MAJOR ENERGY AND INFLATION PROBLEMS AND NOW WITH DANGER OF NORTH KOREAN PROVOCATION INCREASING SINCE KIM IL-SUNG COULD BE ENCOURAGED TO ATTACK ROK. HE GLOOMINGLY DESCRIBED KOREA AS LAND SURROUNDED BY HOSTILE COUNTRIES.

4. IF KIM IL-SUNG DECIDED TO TAKE PROVOCATIVE ACTION PARK VIEWED AS MOST LIKELY CONTINGENCY LIMITED OFFENSIVE AIMED AT EITHER FIVE NORTHWEST COASTAL ISLANDS OR BROADER EFFORT TO CAPTURE SEOUL QUICKLY AND THEN SEEK UN CEASEFIRE WITH SUBSEQUENT GRADUAL COLLAPSE OF REST OF ROK.

5. PARK SAID HE IS DETERMINED GUARD AGAINST ANY CONTINGENCY AND PRESENT IS TIME FOR KOREA TO TIGHTEN ITS GUARD. HE HAS DECIDED TO MAKE HIS STAND, SHOULD ATTACK OCCUR, NORTH OF SEOUL AND HOLD SEOUL AT ALL COSTS. HE HAS ALSO MADE IMPORTANT POLICY DECISION NOT REPEAT NOT TO EVACUATE SEOUL UNDER THESE CIRCUMSTANCES, HAVING DRAWN LESSON FROM CONFUSION IN SOUTH VIETNAM AS RESULT OF EVACUATION OF NORTHERN PART. HE PLANS ORDER UNDERGROUND SHELTERS BUILT IN SEOUL AND BELIEVES POPULACE CAN SUSTAIN AIR ATTACK, AS UK DID IN WORLD WAR II, AFTER INITIAL CONFUSION. IN NOT TOO VEILDE ASIDE, PARK COMMENTED THAT EMBASSIES
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COULD EVACUATE SEOUL EVEN IF KOREANS REMAINED BEHIND BUT THEY WOULD FIND NO SANCTUARY FROM NORTH KOREAN BOMBS IN OTHER PARTS OF KOREA. HE SUGGESTED EMBASSIES INSTEAD DIG UNDERGROUND SHELTERS. PARK CONCLUDED WITH HOPE KIM IL-SUNG NOT MISCALCULATE, BUT PLEDGING DELIVER FATAL BLOW IF HE INITIATES WAR.

6. PARK ALSO DIRECTING URGENT PROCUREMENT OF NECESSARY SPARE PARTS AND ARTILLERY TUBES TO PERMIT I CORPS FORCES TO HAVE SUFFICIENT SUPPLIES TO SUSTAIN NORTH KOREAN ATTACK WITHOUT OVERSEAS RESUPPLY. HE URGED US TO ASSIST THIS EFFORT WHERE PROCUREMENT NOT POSSIBLE WITHIN ROK.

7. US CREDIBILITY. WHILE PARK DID NOT DIRECTLY CHALLENGE CREDIBILITY OF US COMMITMENT, HE INITIATED DISCUSSION OF VIETNAM EXPERIENCE BY ASKING WHETHER US "WAS DESERTING ITS ALLIES." HE PROFESSED DEEP CONCERN ABOUT SURVIVAL OF SMALL COUNTRIES MANY OF WHOM HE REALIZED HAD BECOME TOO DEPENDENT ON US AND LACKED DETERMINATION TO CULTIVATE THEIR OWN CAPABILITIES. HE URGED US NOT TO TAKE STANCE THAT WE HAD HELPED THESE COUNTRIES ENOUGH AND COULD NOT CONTINUE AID. HE THEN EXPRESSED FEARS ABOUT BROADER FREE WORLD RETREATS IN ASIA. FOR KOREA HE HAS DECIDED THAT IT MUST BUILD UP ITS NATIONAL STRENGTH IN DEFENSE AND ECONOMY AND ACCOMPLISH TASK WITHIN NEXT FEW YEARS. HE HOPES TO ACHIEVE TWO-GERMANY SOLUTION IN KOREA AND WILL GIVE NORTH KOREANS NO PRETEXT FOR WAY. WHILE HE VIEWED PRESENCE OF US FORCES AS BEST DETERRENT AGAINST NORTH, HE "KNOWS" US WILL NOT STAY IN KOREA "FOREVER" SINCE AMERICAN PUBLIC WILL FORCE WITHDRAWAL. IN THIS CONNECTION, HE NOTED SOME KOREANS AND ELEMENTS ABROAD MISUNDERSTOOD ROK POLICIES AND THEIR CRITICISM INTERFERED WITH ATTEMPTS TO STRENGTHEN ROK. HIS GOAL IS TO BUILD UP ROK POWER SO IT CAN STAND ALONE AFTER US FORCES LEAVE.

8. I INTERJECTED AT VARIOUS POINTS IN PARK'S DISCOURSE TO REASSURE HIM THAT WE ARE WATCHING NORTH KOREAN INTENTIONS CLOSELY INCLUDING KIM IL-SUNG'S VISIT TO PEKING, TO REAFFIRM US COMMITMENT ON BASIS OF PRESIDENT'S STATEMENTS, URGING HIM NOT TO DRAW INVIDIOUS COMPARISONS BETWEEN VIETNAM AND
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KOREA, TO POINT OUT DETERRENT CAPACITY OF PRESENT US FORCES AND RESTRAINTS IMPOSED ON PYONGYANG BY MOSCOW AND PEKING, TO STRESS COMPARATIVE STRENGTH OF ROK OVER NORTH KOREA, AND TO URGE MORE OPTIMISTIC VIEW OF OVERALL INTERNATIONAL SITUATION.

I URGED THAT WE WORK TOGETHER TO DEVELOP TPUBLIC SUPPORT FOR CONTINUED US COMMITMENT AND FOR OTHER EFFORTS TO DETER NORTH KOREAN ATTACK.

9. COMMENT: IT WAS CLEAR FROM PARK'S DISCOURSE THAT RECENT DEVELOPMENTS HAVE LEFT HIM IN A GLOOMY AND SOMBER MOOD, WITH FOREBODINGS ABOUT NORTH KOREAN EFFORT TO LAUNCH LIMITED PROVOCATIVE ATTACKS, TESTING US INTENTIONS. I AM NOT CONVINCED THAT MY WORDS OF REASSURANCE DID MUCH TO RELIEVE PARK'S MOOD. IF WE CAN TAKE QUICKLY A NUMBR OF THE SUPPORTIVE ACTIONS RECOMMENDED IN EMBTEL 2807, THEY WILL BE MORE CONVINCING TO HIM.
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